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HANS BALDUNG GRIEN (c.1480-1545)—The Madonna with Child and Angels.
The Hearst Fund

CHRISTMAS IN ART

DURING THE TIME of the early Christians, not the Holy Night itself but the adoration of the Magi was the main feast to be celebrated. On Christmas a new Light had shown to the mortal world, as represented by the three kings. Hence the earliest pictures of Christ's appearance portray the scene of the three wise men adoring the Savior-child.

But from the sixth century onward, the endless procession of Christmas representations begins, comprehending at least six different scenes: the Annunciation, the Message to the Shepherds, the Holy Night, the Adoration by the Shepherds, the Adoration by the Magi, and the Flight into Egypt. Sometimes several of these scenes are interwoven; sometimes all of them are shown in a succession of separate pictures on an altar-piece, a mural, or a work of sculpture.

About the year one thousand there are indications that the mass of the people become more interested in the celebration of the feast. The scenes between King Herod and the three Magi are dramatized, and the message to the shepherds is told with many details so characteristic of our old folksongs.

During the following centuries the different races and epochs work their own mood and changing sentiment into the Christmas stories. Thus the early Renaissance starts with the splendor and glamor of Gentile da Fabriano's representation, continuing with Benozzo Gozzoli's murals. And the artists of the High Renaissance bring the theme of Mother and Child to that perfection which becomes the standard for many generations to come.

In Italy, the self-contained existence represented the new ideal of the Renaissance in the North. Los Angeles County Museum has recently acquired a Christmas painting* by the celebrated early German master Hans Baldung Grien *(circa 1480-1545)*. This painting originated in the time of the Reformation, when almost everyone in the North was passionately concerned with religious problems, not so much as a matter of tradition and institution but of conscience and conviction.

Hans Baldung Grien, the Strasburg painter, was one of the most impassioned artists of his time. *The Madonna with Child and Angels* (see *Cover*) is a typical example of his art, in which his emotional temperament leads to motion as an expression. The curtain in the upper right of the painting has just been drawn upward so that we may look at the lovely scene. A little angel is moving the drapery still a little farther, to make the holy Dove with its halo fully visible. The large curtain at the left is just in full motion, supposedly drawn aside by an angel standing outside the left of the frame. Another drapery in the background is agitated by a little angel who is trying to lift its heavy fabric and creep into the scene. A third angel precociously turns the pages of a big prayerbook, one after another.

The figure of the Madonna participates in the general movement which rushes down from the angel in the upper right corner over the holy Dove. Her figure continues into a spiral of floating garments. The color of the painting heightens its dynamic character.

*Accession number A.5141-94, the Hearst Fund. Canvas size 18¼ inches by 14¾ inches wide.

The background curtain is of a fervent red, the lighted ridges of its sharp-edged folds making the deep color appear still darker and preparing our eye for a full outburst of flaming red in the foreground drapery. This powerful contrast is further enhanced by the blue garment of the Virgin, which is struck by such a strong light that its blue turns into white.

All this activity and contrast of colors is brought into balance by the nearly motionless attitude of the Virgin. She concentrates the full strength of her feeling upon the Child which she softly embraces and presses to her heart. We are reminded of words in the Scripture: "But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" (St. Luke). Innumerable representations of Christmas scenes followed during the next centuries. But there is one painter, two hundred years later, who made the effects of lighting, as used in Baldung Grien's picture, an even more powerful instrument of expression. If ever anyone was predestined to compose Christmas scenes it must have been Rembrandt. Almost all of his paintings and drawings are centered around the one theme: how light shines into the darkness.

In one of his engravings *The Message to the Shepherds*, a fireball seems to explode in the height. Its rays, transforming themselves into angels, penetrate the dark with their message that Light will shine over this earth and brighten the hearts and souls of mankind.

In his painting of *The Adoration* (in Buckingham Palace) the kings, representatives of the world, emerge out of the darkness. The more they approach the magic circle of heavenly Light, the clearer they appear and the more they glitter in their wonderful stones and vestments. They receive their shining and precious existence from the Light emanating from the new-born Child.

The Holy Family by Rembrandt is a very simple and touching interpretation of the theme. Shiny little angels invade a dark room to greet the Child, sleeping in a small cradle, surrounded by white linen and by a bright-red coverlet offering the most attractive color of the entire picture. The Mother has turned her face from the Holy Book, and her eyes look at the Child, trying to comprehend this wonder of life! From the picture there flows the joyful blessing the new-born Child brings to his Mother. It inspires the father to work with happiness. Here the spiritual Light has materialized in a human being, to grow and ripen and radiate amongst mankind. Obviously interwoven is the blessedness which every child brings—not only to the family into which it is born, but to the whole human family, connecting as a new link in the past and future chain of man's life.

ALOIS J. SCHARDT, *Ph.D.*

THE PLANTS AND TREES OF CHRISTMAS

Many plants, trees and flowers are prominent in the folklore of Christmas time because of their connection with, or allusion to, the birth and life of Christ himself. The story of those gifts the Wise Men from the East brought to the Christ child is one most familiar. Sent by King Herod to find the new-born prophet, the Wise Men fell before Mary and worshiped her Son, and presented rare gifts as a thank-offering to the mother of Jesus. What were the gifts of the Magi?—gold, frankincense (a fragrant gum-resin obtained from the stem of several species of Boswellia), and myrrh (another obtained in Arabia and northeastern Africa from a burseraceous tree Balsamodendron Myrrha). These and other rare spices and perfumes had been offered in sacrifice to the deities of pre-Christian times.

Another ancient story concerns a little shepherd girl who sat weeping amidst her flock, when an angel appeared to her. Asked why she wept, the child said: "Because the Wise Men are bringing gifts to the Christ child, but I have nothing to offer." "Take those," said the angel, pointing to the ground. And there, before the child's eyes, clumps of beautiful white lilies had sprung in full bloom from among the patches of dead grass and snow! Quickly she gathered a bunch and went with them to the Christ child; but once there she was timid, and stood at a distance. When Mary saw her, she said: "Come, little one, and present your gift." So she approached, and laid her lilies in the crib—and when the Christ child tenderly touched the blossoms they turned a delicate pink!

This association of plants with the birth of Christ may have had its inception in the Roman custom of decorating buildings with evergreens at the Kalends, the Roman New Year's Day. In wintertime, when other growth is brown and dead, the evergreens manifest an abiding life within the plant-world. They may well have been used, therefore, in sacramental reference to the spirit of growth and fertility, at a season when everything seems threatened by the powers of blight. From such pre-Christian beginnings has come the present-day use of plants in Christmas decoration. Of all the plants once so used, those of particular interest to us are the poinsettia, hawthorn, holly and mistletoe, the Yule log and the Christmas tree.

The brilliant, flaming star of the poinsettia is one of the season's most popular cut flowers or pot-plants. It is a native of Mexico and Central America, and a fairly recent addition to the holiday decorations; and no Christmas legends are connected with it, except in Spain where it is known as *Flor de Noche-buena* or as *Flor de pascua.*

The hawthorn, according to legend, at one time saved the life of Christ. Once when He was resting in the woods, a group of enemies came along the path near Him. Realizing the danger, a flock of magpies covered him with a screen of hawthorn berries; and as soon as the men had passed, a flock of swallows came and removed the berries! A hawthorn branch was used as a staff by St. Joseph of Arimathea when, after Christ's crucifixion, the holy man journeyed from Palestine to England. Arriving at Glastonbury he stuck his staff into the soil, where presently it put forth leaves, and produced flowers the following Christmas Eve.

Popular for decorations since the time of the Druids, holly is regarded as a special tree of the fairies. Since it is supposed to be hated by witches, it has been used at doors and

windows to keep out evil spirits; but there is a superstition that it is unlucky to take holly into the house except at Christmas time. The name "holly" came not from *holy,* as is often wrongly supposed, but from *hollin,* which was one of the names given it by early writers. Used in Christmas decoration, the thorns and blood-red berries of the holly symbolize the crown of thorns worn by Christ to His crucifixion. This crown was supposedly plaited from holly, and its berries, which had been white, turned red like drops of blood.

Mistletoe has a special place in the decorations of Christmas time, for it is associated with both Teutonic myth and Celtic ritual. It was with mistletoe that the beloved Balder was shot, and the plant played an important part in the Druidic ceremony described by Pliny. When the sacred anniversary of the winter solstice arrived, the ancient Britons, accompanied by their priests the Druids, went forth with great pomp and rejoicing, to gather mistletoe. Only mistletoe that grew upon oaks was chosen, and oaks that bore the most mistletoe were sought for. In flowing white robes, wearing a golden chain about his neck and gold bands on his arms, the Arch-Druid ascended the sacred oak and cut sprays of the pearl-berried parasite,—with golden sickles, for nothing so coarse as iron would do to cut the holy mistletoe. The plants must be gathered in the ample folds of the priest's robe, for it was considered too sacred to ever touch the ground. Two white bulls were then sacrificed, in a ceremony of reverence and prayer. Finally the mistletoe was divided into small portions and distributed among the people, with a prayer for divine favor and the blessing of nature. The precious branches were thereafter kept in the houses as a safeguard against fire and a charm against evil spirits.

Kissing under the mistletoe had its origin in a Scandinavian myth. Balder, the Scandinavian counterpart of Appollo, received a talisman from his mother Frigga or Freyja (the equivalent of Venus) against injury from everything which sprang from the four elements—fire, water, air and earth. Loki, an evil spirit who had an enmity against Balder, formed an arrow of mistletoe, which grew from none of these elements; and placing the arrow in the hands of the blind Helder, Loki directed him to launch it at the seemingly invulnerable Balder. It mortally wounded Balder, and the tears of his mother Frigga became the white berries of the mistletoe. Through the united efforts of the gods, Balder was restored to life; and Frigga, being the goddess of love and beauty, grateful for the return of her son, is said to bestow a kiss upon anyone who shall pass under the mistletoe. So dear is this plant to Scandinavian antiquity that, should enemies chance to meet it in the woods, they lay aside their weapons and declare a truce until the following day. From this may have arisen the custom of hanging a mistletoe branch over the doorway, as a pledge of peace and friendship to be sealed with a kiss.

The Christian peoples of the world have various centers for their Christmas festivities. In Spain and Italy, rejoicing is focused about the crib in both the home and church. In Germany, the light-laden tree is the symbol of Christmas. And in rural France and among the southern Slavs, the great log that is solemnly brought in and kindled on the hearth forms the center of the festival.

Although this great log burning on the Vigil of Nativity is no longer a principal feature of the English or American Christmas, it had perhaps the oldest festival use. In pre-Christian times the burning of the Yule log signaled the passing of the year's shortest day. The celebration was a prolonged affair, lasting as long as the meat and drink held out. As Yule later became Christmas, the rejoicing extended from Christmas Eve to the Feast of the Epiphany ("Twelfth Night") on January 6th.

Log ceremonies assume their most elaborate forms in the eastern part of Europe. Here the Serbs and Croats fell two or three young oaks to a family, sometimes one for each male member, and the largest tree furnishes the Christmas log. In some districts the felling occurs before sunrise, and corn is thrown upon the trees with the words: "Good morning, Christmas!" Elsewhere, women and girls wind red silk and gold wire around the oak trunks, and adorn them with leaves and flowers. As twilight comes, the logs are brought into the house and laid on the fire. Lighted tapers are held at either side of the doorway as the father enters with the first log, and corn (or wine) is thrown over him by some member of the family. Sometimes the father himself sprinkles corn and wine on the log saying, as the flames spring up: "Goodly be thy birth." In Montenegro the father usually breaks a piece of unleavened bread over the log, and pours upon it a libation of wine.

In western Europe, particularly the south of France, the Christmas log is still common in less modernized places. On Christmas Eve the whole family goes solemnly out to fetch the log, in a procession headed by the oldest and with the last-born bringing up the rear. A carol is sung, praying for blessings on the house, and the youngest child of the family pours wine over the log in the names of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The log is then thrown on the fire, and its charcoal is kept all the year to be used as a remedy for many family ills.

The Yule log was in early times common in Italian cities, where it can be traced at least to the eleventh century, and the same is true in many parts of Germany. In our own ante-bellum South, many plantations had an unwritten rule that the black field hands need not labor so long as the Yule log was alight. Sometimes, therefore, the workers would select the biggest and toughest gum-tree trunk they could find, and sink it under water for weeks beforehand to make it as slow-burning as possible! One of these nearly fireproof logs might simmer away for a month.

But the most widespread of all festal institutions, and that which is most delightful to the children, is the Christmas tree. It is a German creation, though even in Germany it attained its immense popularity only as late as the nineteenth century. While it is without roots in national tradition elsewhere, its picturesqueness and gay fascination have made it spread rapidly all over the world.

Though the affinity of the Christmas tree to other sacraments of the vegetation-spirit is obvious, its exact origin is difficult to ascertain. Perhaps the earliest use of the Christmas tree is recorded in Henry Van Dyke's *The First Christmas Tree*,—a lovely story, with some foundation in fact, which has to do with Winifried and the Oak of Geismar. It places the use of the first Christmas tree in the year 722, on the day before Christmas.

According to this story, Winifried left his estate in Wessex, England, the offer of a rich monastery, and a bishopric at the court of King Earl, to go into the wildwood and preach to the heathens. He was a great scholar and priest, a venturesome pilgrim-preacher, and was called the Apostle of Germany. With a band of followers he suffered untold hardships, traveling through most of Germany and Europe to bring Christianity to the unaware. He preached to men who had worshiped demons and weird gods for many centuries in the wilderness, performing bloody sacrifices to appease these fearsome beings. On a particular Christmas Eve, Winifried and his followers came to the edge of the Geismar woods, where the company wanted to make camp. But Winifried urged them on, reminding them it was Yuletide, when the heathen folk of the forest gathered at the thunder-oak of Geismar to worship Thor, their god. He told them of the strange and

evil things in the heathen ceremony, of deeds which make the soul black, to prevent which they must hurry on.

When Winifried and his men came upon the tribe, he found them dressed in white, seated around a huge fire before the thunder-oak. In the center of the circle Hunrad, the old priest, was about to sacrifice the life of Bernhard, a small boy who was the eldest son of the chief Gundbar. "This night," said the priest to Winifried, "is the death-night of the sun god, Baldur the beautiful. Tonight the great Thor, god of thunder and war, to whom this oak is sacred, grieves for Baldur, and is sad and angry with this people because they have forgotten his worship. It is long since an offering has been laid upon his altar, long since the roots of his holy tree have been fed with blood." Just as the priest's hammer was to fall on little Bernhard's head, Winifried struck it with his staff and it fell to the altar, breaking into pieces. Winifried then told the tribe of the birth-night and life of the Savior of mankind; and to prove that Thor neither protected nor dwelt in the oak tree, he asked his men to chop it down.

But just as they began, a strong whirling wind passed over the treetops, gripping the oak by its branches and tearing the great tree from the ground. Falling with a mighty crash, it split into four pieces. From these Winifried asked the heathens to build a chapel to the true God. And as he bowed his head in prayer, he saw a little fir sapling amid the divided ruins of the fallen oak. "Here," he said, "is the living tree, bearing no stain of blood, that shall be the sign of your new worship. Call it the tree of the Christ-child. You shall go no more into the woods to keep your feasts of shame. You shall keep them at home, with laughter and songs, and rites of love. The day is coming when there shall not be a home in all Germany where the children are not gathered around a green fir tree to rejoice in the birth-night of Christ."

Martin Luther appeared next in order of record. Legend says that "he set up for his children a tree with countless candles, an image of the starry heaven whence Christ came down." The first historical mention of the Christmas tree occurs in the notes of a certain unknown citizen of Strasburg, written in the year 1605. "At Christmas, they set up fir trees in the parlors at Strasburg and hang thereon roses cut from colored paper, apples, wafers, gold foil, sweets, etc." The Christmas tree was introduced into France in 1840, when Princess Helene of Mechlenburg brought it to Paris. In 1890 between thirty and thirty-five thousand trees are said to have been sold in Paris. In England it was alluded to in 1789, but did not become at all popular until the 1840's, when Queen Victoria and Prince Albert had a fine Christmas tree and the fashion became widespread and was completely naturalized. In Denmark and Norway the tree was known in 1830, and in Sweden in 1863; but among the Swedes on the coast of Finland it seems to have been used by 1800.

In Germany, unlike other countries, the Christmas tree is not a luxury for the more prosperous, but a real necessity and the very center of the season's festival. No one is too poor or too lonely to have one. The German tree is purely a thing of beauty, and no presents hang from its branches; they are laid apart on a table. At first, the Christmas tree was simply adorned with flowers and ornaments made from paper and nuts; and only later, when the use of trees had been popularized, did it acquire lights and fancier decorations that imitated or suggested flowers and fruits. Originally, actual trees such as cherry, pear or hawthorn were placed in water or potted, so they might bud and blossom for Christmas and the New Year. Probably the custom arose from legendary lore about

the miraculous transformations of Nature on the night of Christ's birth, when the rivers ran wine instead of water, and trees stood in full bloom despite the snow and ice.

In our own country, no special legends or mythology attach to our use of the Christmas tree. Here in a young nation, settled within recent history, we adopted the symbolic tree after it had enjoyed widespread popularity in Europe. Where, when and by whom was the first American Christmas tree used?

It was long thought that a tree the Reverend Henry Schwan erected in his little parish, the Zion Church in Cleveland, on Christmas Eve in 1851, was the first Christmas tree in America. Because he was denounced for introducing a "pagan absurdity" into the sacred season, he determined to discover an earlier precedent for its use. His researches took him to nearby Wooster, Ohio, where he learned that a tailor named August Imgard had introduced the trees four years before. Imgard, as he told the story, had come from Germany to join his brother Fred in Wooster. Here he was lonesome, missing the homey Christmas spirit he had loved in Hessia, and he decided something must be done. Out hiking, he had spied a suitable spruce among a grove of trees on the bank of a small stream; and the day before Christmas he decided to fetch this tree, to provide a Christmas such as his nieces had never seen. His errand was difficult, for the stream had risen and he had to cross it on a fallen log far downstream, returning across the log on hands and knees with the precious tree tied to his back. At last he set the tree up in his brother's house, and decorated it with paper ornaments which he himself made and with a shiny star that he got the local tinsmith to fashion. The result was a sensation in Wooster, and people of all ages came to gaze and admire. The next season, nearly every family in Wooster had a Christmas tree.

Because it was good copy, the story of Imgard's tree persisted for many years in various Ohio papers. The fact that spruce is not native to the Wooster countryside was lightly overlooked by the editors, and made little difference to the folk of Wooster.

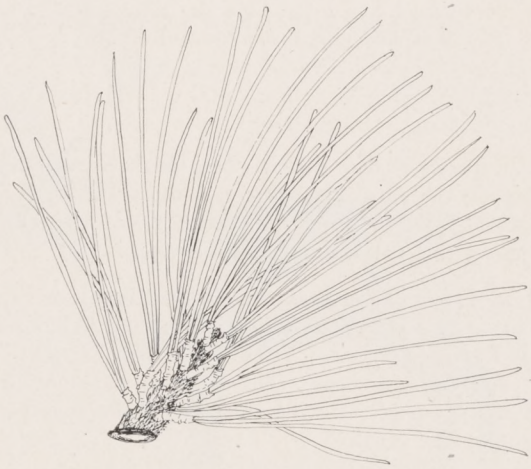
But the search for the first American tree continued. A church in New York had used a Christmas tree in 1847, and in 1840 a Rochester church had one adorned with lights, toys and sweetmeats. It had failed, by the way, to cause such criticism as the Cleveland tree of 1851. The next discovery was at Cincinnati, where personal memoirs of the Krausnick family mentioned a Christmas tree in 1835. In Philadelphia, there were records of a tree in 1834. A German doctor of Philadelphia, Constantin Hering, and a teacher friend Frederick Knorr, had thought the Christmas of 1833 a bleak one. So next year they ferried across the Delaware, found some suitable fir trees in New Jersey, and brought them home. It caused quite a stir, and small boys shouted after them as they carried the trees on their backs through the streets, but they were not discouraged. The doctor appointed evenings for his patients and friends to come and see the wonderful lighted tree. Considerably earlier, an account of "Christmas at Old Fort Dearborn in 1804" (published in 1920 by the Fort Dearborn Magazine) describes the bleak prairies surrounding the fort, and the bitter cold weather outside, which was all but forgotten in the joys of a well-laden table *and a tree,* set in its place of honor amidst the festivities. Was this tree of Captain Whistler's the first Christmas tree in America? We wonder, for Captain Whistler came from northern Ireland, where the Christmas tree was practically unknown at the time. Perhaps he took his idea from the Hessians, with whom he had fought in the Revolution, though we still lack definite evidence that the Hessians themselves had Christmas trees.

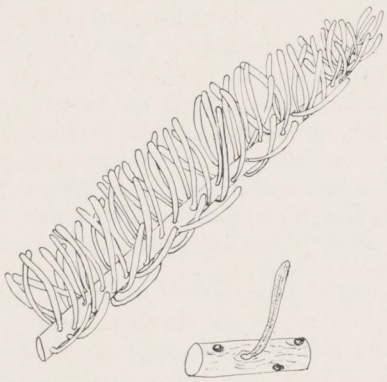
Nowadays, at holiday time, a variety of "Christmas trees" are to be seen. The most familiar kinds may be classed in six groups: the true firs and Douglas fir, spruces and hemlocks, cedars and pines. Their use varies with the different parts of the country, and with the abundance of a tree in the local region. In California, the Douglas fir is most popular, with the white fir a close second; in sections of Wisconsin and Michigan the black spruce is used; and in the northeastern states the balsam fir predominates.

About half of all the American Christmas trees are balsam firs, which have a pyramidal shape, fairly rigid branches, and lustrous dark green needles that do not fall as soon as those of other trees. The needle when removed leaves a conspicuous round scar. The silver-tip or white fir has needles crowded and more or less erect on the branches. The Douglas fir has a nice pyramidal form, and the needles when removed leave an inconspicuous oval scar. The spruces with their dense crown and pyramidal habit make admirable Christmas trees. Their needles are stiff, four-sided and usually prickly to the touch. Hemlocks have flat needles, blunt and irregular, and of a dark green color that gives a beautiful lacey effect; but their flexible branches make them better adapted to use for wreaths. Pines are used in some places, as in the Rockies, where firs and spruces are not available. Their needles are gracefully long and grow in bundles of two to five. The cedars, like the pines, are used for Christmas trees in certain localities.

BONNIE TEMPLETON.

Left, HEMLOCK; right, DOUGLAS FIR. *One-half natural size.*





(Above) PINE. *One-third natural size.*
(Center) CEDAR. *Two-thirds natural size.*
(Below) Left, WHITE FIR; right, SPRUCE. *One-half natural size.*

THE REINDEER

The reindeer is the only species of deer that has been domesticated and made a servant to man. It is in many respects the most interesting and important of all members of the deer family. Yet a great lack of information, or even much misinformation, exists in the minds of most people concerning this curious and valuable animal.

The name "reindeer" itself, we find, is derived from the Finnish or Lappish word "reino," meaning pasturage—hence, a pastured or domesticated deer. The Old World reindeer is known to scientists as *Rangifer tarandus,* from the French "rangier" meaning to range, plus the Latin "fera" meaning wild beast. The *tarandus* is a pure Greek word denoting "a horned quadruped of the north." Piecing these definitions together, we have "a wild, horned quadruped ranging the north."

The reindeer of the Old World and its counterpart in the New are animals not to be found south of 50° latitude. Today the Old World reindeer inhabits the tundra regions of Scandinavia, and Siberia as far south as the Urals and Lake Baikal; but the species formerly ranged south through the British Isles, France, and even Spain, where it was extensively hunted by the cave-dwelling inhabitants. Many primitive rock drawings of reindeer, and deposits of their bones, have been found in the ancient caves of that area. We know that the Old World reindeer was present as early as a million years ago, for its fossil record occurs in the Pleistocene deposits of Europe.

The New World "reindeer" or caribou ranges through Greenland, Newfoundland, Canada and Alaska. Although very closely related to its Old World counterpart, it does differ in the construction of its antlers and in other minor characters which permit easy distinction. Only the Old World species, however, has been domesticated.

Rangifer, although a member of the deer family, lacks the grace and symmetry so characteristic of others in the group. The shortness and thickness of its neck, and the shape and size of a head which is not carried erect as in other deer, but low so as to form a straight line with the back, tend to make the animal rather ungainly in appearance. The antlers, however, are large and ornamental. Differing from all other deer, the female reindeer as well as the male possesses antlers. But the female retains her antlers until spring, while the male sheds his, in the usual fashion, at the beginning of winter. The hoofs of the reindeer are also exceptional, for instead of being narrow and pointed as in most deer, they are broad, flat and spreading. When the animal sets its foot down it is able to spread or contract the hoof in adjustment to the ground surface. This enables the reindeer to travel upon snow-covered surfaces without sinking so deeply into the snow.

The most interesting thing about the Old World reindeer is the story of its domestication by man. Historians disagree as to when, or in exactly what area, the domestication of reindeer began. They do tell us, however, that while paleolithic man of western Europe hunted the reindeer extensively, there is no evidence whatever that any domestication was attempted. This culture trait was also entirely lacking in aboriginal America. Some students hold to a belief that the process of domestication is of a very late date; but other and more thorough workers have uncovered Chinese allusions to the use of reindeer (by neighboring tribes to the northwest) as early as the fifth century A.D. Some historians

believe that domestication originated in the Baikal region of eastern Siberia, and from there spread northwestward to its present-day center in Lapland; but others contend that it began in the Scandinavian area.

In areas of reindeer tending we find the animal assuming much the same role as our domestic horse and cow, being used as a riding animal and beast of burden by some tribes such as the Tungusians of Siberia, or among the Lapps as a draft animal to pull sledges. Reindeer are milked by many tribes, but it is a laborious process and the yield is very small, averaging only about four teacupfuls in a 24-hour period.

Yet the reindeer, while often becoming very tame and following its master about like a dog, licking his hand and answering to call, has never been brought fully under the control of man. In fact, the animal controls man to a far greater degree than does man control the reindeer! While submitting to tasks of labor, the reindeer must be given freedom to graze and browse when its work day is over, for it cannot be confined for more than short periods of time. To thrive, it must stay within a well-defined geographical area that offers the types of plant life on which it subsists. Man must therefore accept a nomadic existence and follow his wandering reindeer herds. Thus reindeer raising differs greatly from the keeping of cattle or horses. The latter have so completely submitted to the will of man that they cannot now subsist without his care: it is he who must provide them with food and shelter. But "domesticated" reindeer are quite independent of their masters, and rely on their natural instinct for finding food. They require no shelter, and spend the night in the open the same as their wild relatives. Feeding upon tender leaves and the buds of plants in the spring and summer months, reindeer subsist during the winter on lichens or "reindeer moss" which they obtain by pawing away the snow to reach the sought-after plants.

Between 1892-1902 the introduction of 1280 domesticated reindeer into the Territory of Alaska was undertaken. This was an experiment to determine whether the reindeer was a suitable animal to bolster the precarious economy of the Eskimo, who is dependent upon fishing and hunting for subsistence. The Eskimo is not a herder by nature, but the

manner in which he has adapted himself to a new pattern of life has been most gratifying. Lapp herders from Siberia were brought to Alaska with the initial reindeer herds, to teach the Eskimaux the rudiments of their tending. Many of these people have remained in Alaska and now own herds of their own, as the reindeer population has increased from the original 1280 animals to a present total of several hundred thousand.

Reindeer are raised in Alaska primarily for meat, and millions of pounds are exported annually. This industry is still in its infancy, but promises to develop into one of the greatest importance. Reindeer meat is fine-grained, comparing favorably with beef, and has proved widely popular. Department of Agriculture experts estimate that, if properly managed, the grazing land of Alaska will support three million reindeer.

All Americans, young and old, know the role played by the reindeer in our Christmas mythology. As each Christmas season envelops us, we have again the beloved yuletide tales and symbols, enjoy them as in years past, and then put them aside as the holidays are overtaken by a new year. But how many of us have especially wondered where in the misty corners of history such tales had their beginnings? Here in America we naturally associate reindeer with the Christmas myths, without pausing to ask why. Perhaps we feel that to pry too deeply into the origin of such traditions will spoil their mystery and charm. But there is no such danger in exploring the association of reindeer with jolly old Saint Nick.

Delving into the familiar story, we find that the reindeer myth apparently evolved in our own United States. It is believed that the story of Saint Nicholas himself was brought to this country by the early Dutch settlers of New Amsterdam. Since then the oft-told tale has undergone many transformations, until we find that the grey horse fomerly used by Santa Claus has been replaced by picturesque reindeer drawing a sleigh. Washington Irving mentioned this sleigh and reindeer as early as 1809; but it was not until 1822 that Clement C. Moore endeared the reindeer to the hearts of all Americans, with his immortal Christmas poem *A Visit from Saint Nicholas:**

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse . . .

Here we first meet them by name,—our friends Dasher and Dancer, Prancer and Vixen, Comet and Cupid, Dunder and Blitzen,—in Moore's familiar lines:

When, what to my wondering eyes should appear
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer! . . .

KENNETH E. STAGER.

*Vignette drawn from a sexto decimo edition printed 1864 in Boston.

EUGENE JOSEPH FISCHER

In the thirty-six years which mark the establishing and development of the Los Angeles County Museum, no single member of its staff has experienced so long a period of service, or has contributed so much to the preparation of its collections, as Eugene J. Fischer. Even before the original building of the Museum opened its doors to the public, in 1913, he had served on the technical staff of this institution as preparator and osteologist; and he has been responsible ever since for the preparation and construction of all the skeletons of modern vertebrates in its Hall of Osteology, and of practically all the skeletons of fossil birds and mammals from the famous Rancho La Brea asphalt deposits now seen in Hancock Hall of the Museum.

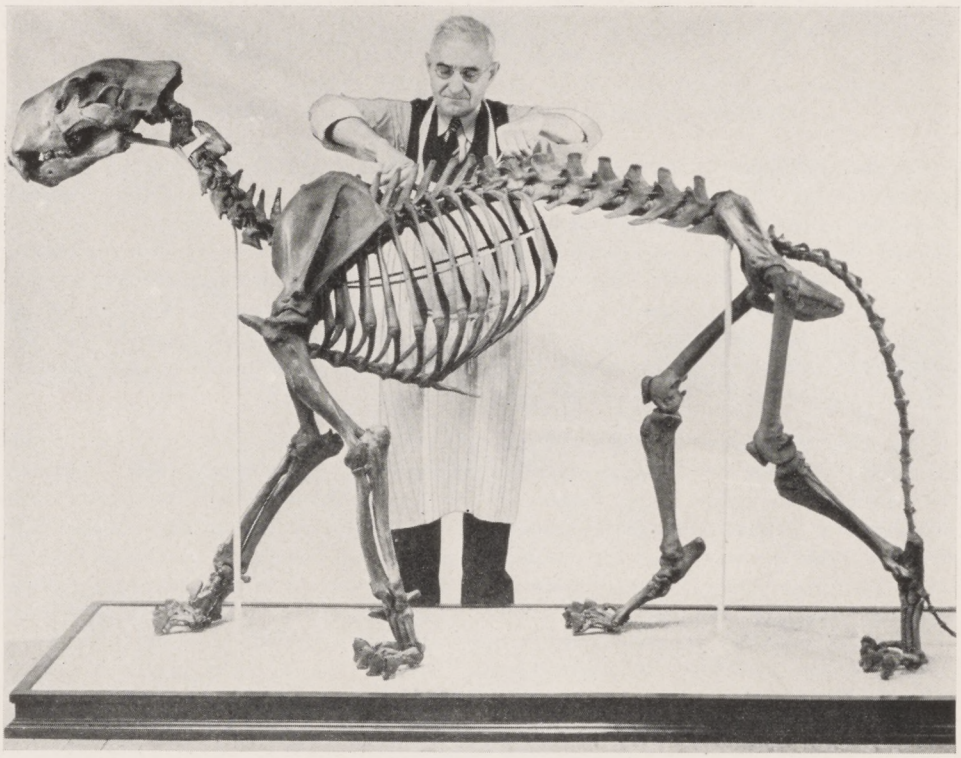
Mr. Fischer was born in upper Alsace on March 22, 1877, and came to America with his parents when he was 14 years old. The family settled in Rochester, New York, and not long after its arrival young Eugene entered the employ of Ward's Natural Science Establishment in that city. Working long hours at a compensation of two and one-half dollars a week, he served his apprenticeship in preparing zoological specimens, and in taxidermy. Roughing out the skeletons of five iguanas was one of his first tasks. Fischer describes the art of taxidermy as it was practiced in those days in the following words: "Fifty years ago when we constructed a mounted animal like a buffalo, we wound the legs and shaped them with excelsior and string. Within each leg was a metal rod, treated at each end, and there was a two-by-four timber which had been cut to the measurements of the skin. The wood support had two cross pieces. These metal rods and timbers were bolted to a base. The framework was then covered with the skin, which was first sewed up along the legs. The base was then turned upside down and hung from the ceiling, and the remainder of the body was stuffed tight with hay. Finally the belly was sewed up, and the animal brought to normal position, after which it was shaped with a mallet and a long sewing needle. The head and teeth were completed in clay."

A few years ago, while on a trip to Washington, Fischer had opportunity to re-examine some of these old mounted specimens. He was struck by the fact that they are still valuable, since they demonstrate in the history of taxidermy some of the early methods that have become obsolete with introduction of the newer technique of building a manikin over which the skin is stretched.

Fischer remained with Ward's for ten years, until in 1901 he was employed by the Field (now, Chicago) Museum of Natural History. Here he became a member of that group of skilled artisans and artists who, like Akeley, were destined to become famous in later years.

While at the Field Museum he prepared most of the skull materials studied by D. G. Elliot for his monographs on modern mammals. It was here as well as at Ward's that he gained that expert knowledge of mounting skeletons of small vertebrates, and the delicate skeletons of birds, which was to prove so valuable in his later work at the Los Angeles Museum.

In the summer of 1907 Fischer resigned his post and came to California. In the fall of that year his attention was directed to the tar deposits of Rancho La Brea by James Z.



Gilbert, a teacher at Los Angeles High School, and by an article "Death Trap of the Ages" which had been published in *Sunset Magazine* by Dr. John C. Merriam. His interest aroused, he visited the area, subsequently obtained permission to dig from G. Allan Hancock, son of Major Henry Hancock who had owned the land, and began excavating in the brea beds. He soon acquired a sufficiently large collection of fossil skulls and bones to permit him, during his evenings, to prepare a mounted skeleton of a sabre-tooth cat. A photograph of this first specimen appeared in an article by Gilbert, on the fossils from Rancho La Brea, in the *Bulletin of the Southern California Academy of Sciences* for January, 1910. The skeleton itself is now in the Chicago Museum of Natural History.

It was while excavating at Rancho La Brea that Fischer became acquainted with Drs. Loye Miller and John C. Merriam. In September, 1908, he started collecting for the University of California, and this work continued until the following year when no further funds were available. He was then transferred to Berkeley, where he was employed by Dr. Joseph Grinnell of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology in the preparation of the modern osteological material that comprised part of the collection acquired by the Alexander Alaska Expedition. During this time he also mounted several modern skeletons for that museum. After completion of this work, Fischer returned to Los Angeles in October, 1910.

Prior to 1910 the Southern California Academy of Sciences had collected at Rancho La Brea, and the materials acquired by the Academy were segregated by Fischer in that year. He was able to prepare two additional skeletons of the sabre-tooth, one for the

High School, the other for the Los Angeles Museum. The latter specimen is now at the California Institute of Technology. During the following year (1911) Fischer prepared mounted skeletons of several extinct mammals from Rancho La Brea, including a female bison, a ground sloth, and a dire wolf. He also commenced work on a mastodon skeleton, the largest animal then included in the Rancho La Brea collection on exhibit at the Museum.

Under Frank S. Daggett as its first director, and with financial aid from the County of Los Angeles, the Museum began to excavate at Rancho La Brea in the summer of 1913. Fischer recalls that on July 7th of that year he and a fellow worker, at the request of Mr. Daggett, started the first diggings for the Museum at this site. By September the Museum had a staff of ten men collecting in the brea deposits, under the field supervision of Luther E. Wyman.

Through the succeeding years Fischer prepared numerous mounted skeletons of modern vertebrates, varying in size from a humming bird to a finback whale. In addition, many disarticulated skeletons now used in comparative anatomical studies attest the industry of the man. It should be pointed out that the disagreeable tasks of roughing out and macerating the skeletal parts in the preparation of the material were also largely done by him. His contribution of greatest scientific significance is seen in Hancock Hall, where the many mounted skeletons of extinct animals from the Rancho La Brea Pleistocene, including the mastodon and mammoth, represent not only a collection of great educational value to scientist and layman alike, but also one of the principal attractions to the visiting public. In recent years the value of this collection has been enhanced by the addition of mounted skeletons of fossil birds from the asphalt, likewise prepared by Fischer. His long previous experience with modern bird skeletons has been especially helpful, for it is safe to say that there are in the world today very few technicians capable of handling this kind of material with such skill as Fischer has shown.

Though time and labor inevitably etch their signature on aging face and hands, the serenity of the conscientious artisan is still evident in Fischer's rounded cheeks and twinkling eyes. Graphically revealing, however, are his hands that show the effects of long contact with the tools and materials of his profession. Nearing threescore years and ten, and with forty years of service at the Museum, Fischer may take justifiable pride in his scientific accomplishments. Profound appreciation of his ceaseless activity go to him from this institution. It will be difficult for those who follow him to equal or exceed this record.

CHESTER STOCK

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The Museum Association, authorized by the Museum Associates to enable our citizens to become more closely allied with the Los Angeles County Museum and cooperate with its programs and development, at present numbers 472 members. The annual membership dues provide purchase funds for additions to the collections of the Museum, for the publication of the Museum Quarterly, for expenses incidental to the various affairs sponsored by the Association. When new exhibitions are opened, the Association has planned significant premieres and social affairs for its members. Musicales, lectures on history, science, and art, and Museum tours are a regular part of the program. Members of the Association are sent invitations to all Museum previews of outstanding exhibitions, a subscription to the Museum Quarterly, notices of special events, and have an opportunity to meet the leaders of the community who are bound by a common interest in the Arts and Sciences.

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